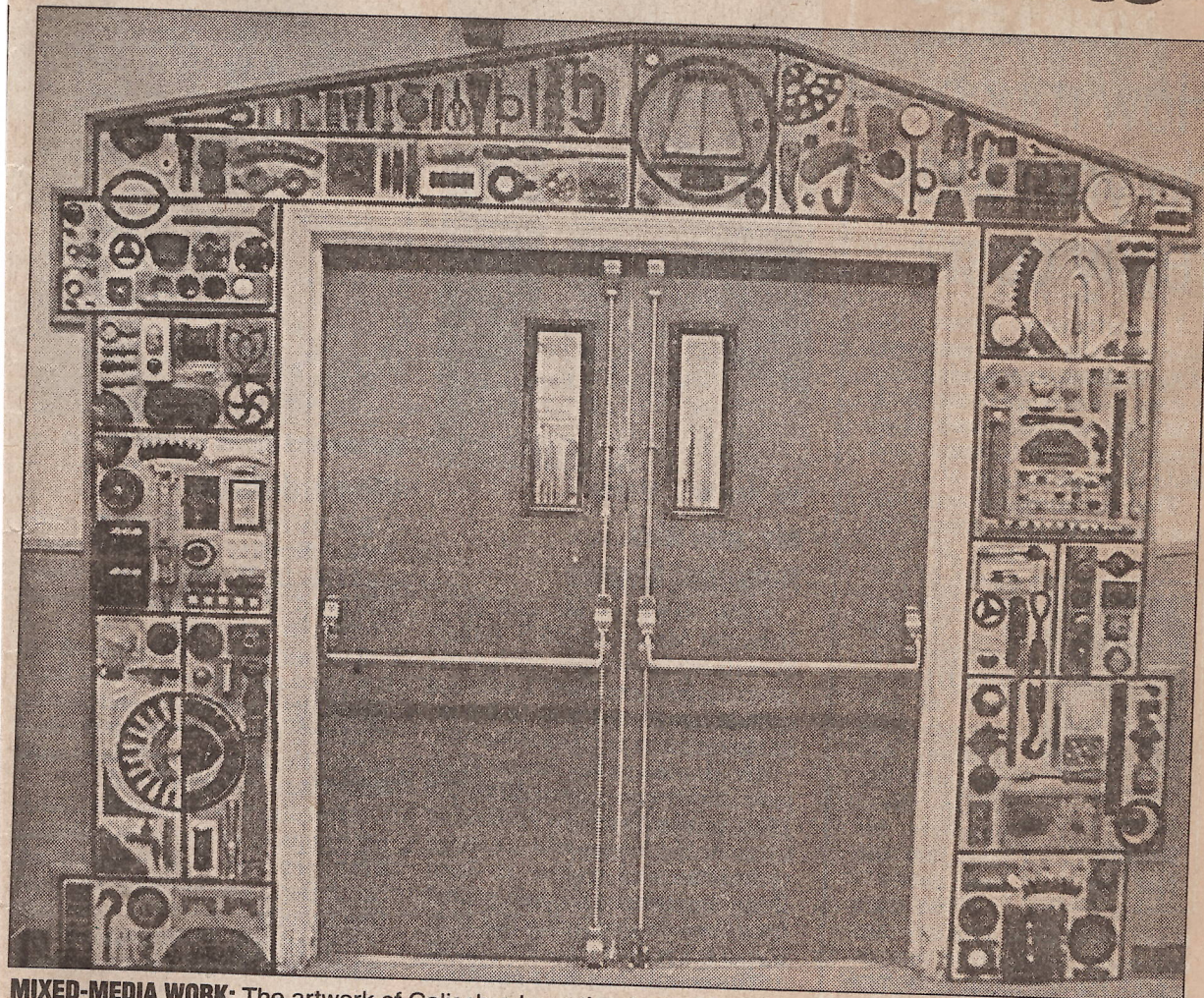


Art in Purdue basements



MIXED-MEDIA WORK: The artwork of Calisch adorns the doorway to Room 302 of the Chemical Engineering Building at Purdue University. Calisch envisioned a "wall relief that was completely made out of Purdue paraphernalia, Purdue artifacts, if you will."

microscopes and scientific gauges and scales, to books and old, wooden typeset letters.

"A lot of the stuff I don't even know what it is," Calisch says. "I just picked it because it looked neat."

From the Union, he took old billiard balls and a couple of forgotten books. In the Biochemistry Building he came up with dozens of old test tubes, vials and petri dishes. He came away from the vet school with a set of old bones. And from a Dumpster he pulled an entire wooden table.

Time to create

When his collection was complete, Calisch sorted through it, taking apart gadgets and chopping some items into tiny shapes. Other artifacts he set aside whole and untouched.

Then he arranged his favorite

Calisch wanted to create the effect of a grand Romanesque entrance — an appropriate symbol, he thought, for a place of higher learning.

In ancient times, portals were imposing doorways that opened into sacred buildings. "As people left the room, they knew that they had been somewhere or heard something exceptional," Calisch says. "And that's what education is about."

Within the plaster tiles, Calisch arranged the artifacts according to shape, color and texture. His design shows off a sense of order and organization as well as his penchant for creating interesting patterns and striking juxtapositions.

Rows of test tubes set up a strong rhythm. Ornamental drawer pulls and old-fashioned architectural filigree add elegant decoration. A line

and circled by a rusty gear.

"There's something scientific next to something artistic and something literary next to something mathematic," Calisch explains.

While he considered different sizes and shapes, Calisch also played different textures and colors off of each other, all the time striving for an overall palette of weathered wood and rusted metal to convey history and tradition.

"Going into it, I thought about the aesthetic that would develop," Calisch says. "You fall in love with old wood and rusty steel and bent wire and nuts and bolts, old bicycle wheels, things that most people think are junk."

Overall, Calisch is pleased with his contribution, pleased to have resurrected bits of Purdue that have been lost and forgotten.